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CEREBUS

GOING HOME

11

$2.25 USA • $3.50 CANADA • £1.50 UK

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MAY

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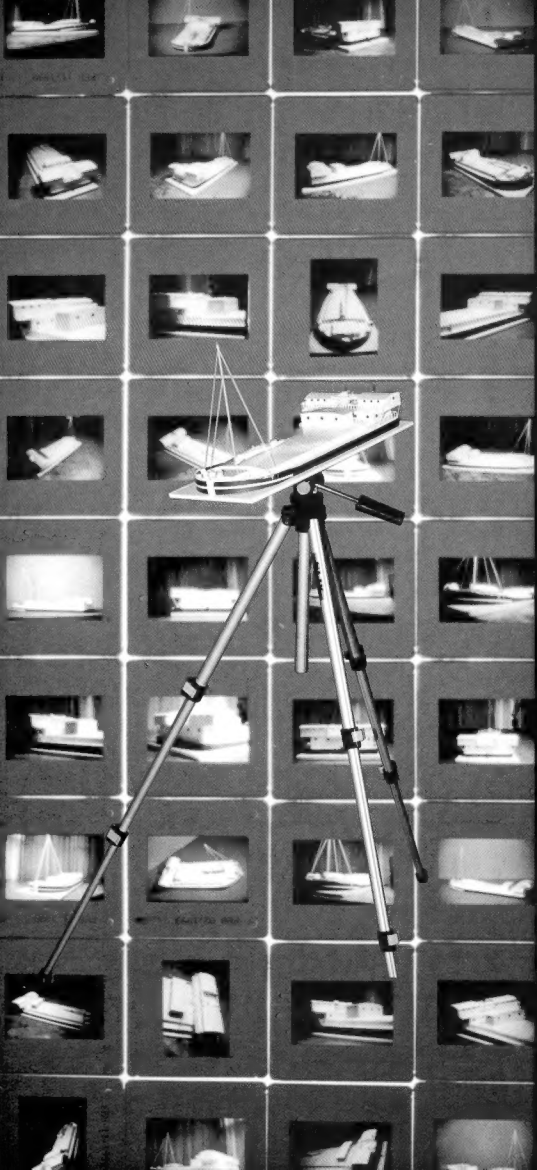

Cerebus

NO. 242 MAY 1999

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GOING HOME

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BOOK ONE
Sudden Moves
(Cerebus 232 to 239)

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BOOK TWO
Fall and the River
(Cerebus 240 to 250)

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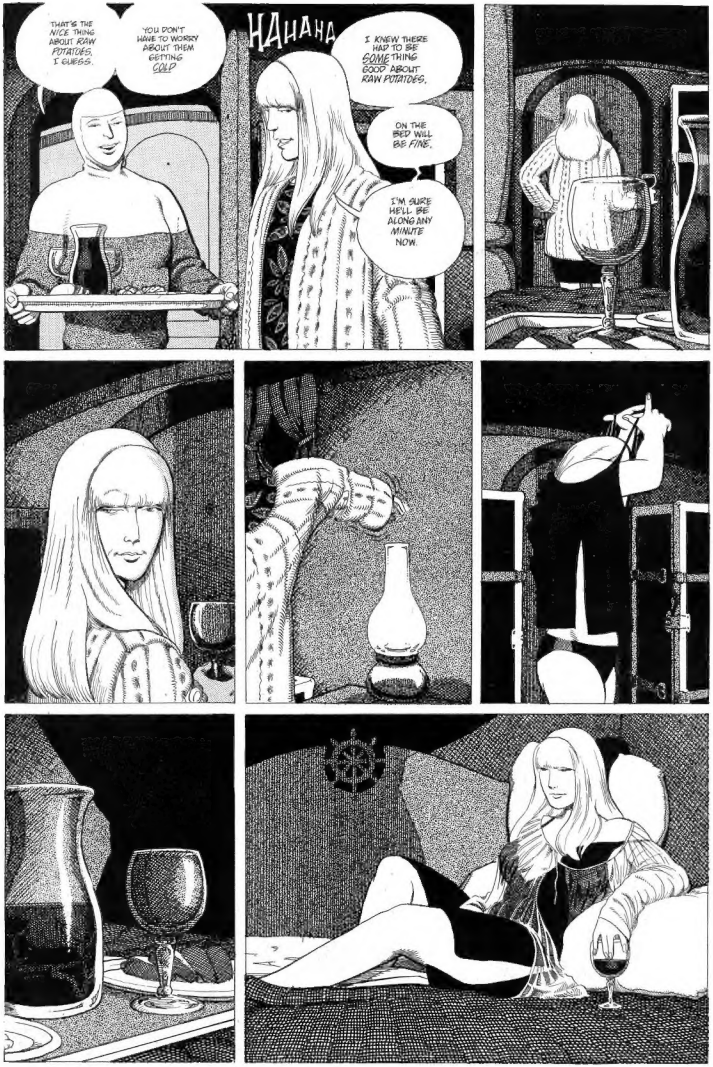
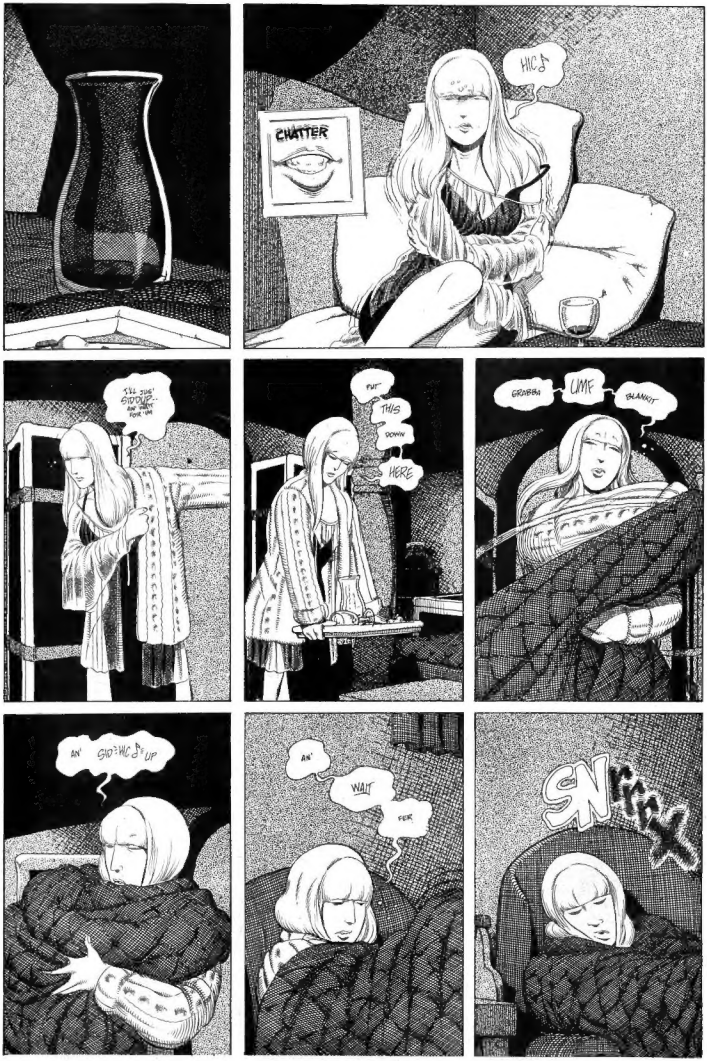

THAT'S THE NICE THING ABOUT RAW POTATOES, I GUESS.
YOU DON'T HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT THEM GETTING COLD
HAHAHA
I KNEW THERE HAD TO BE SOME THING GOOD ABOUT RAW POTATOES.
ON THE BED WILL BE FINE.
I'M SURE HE'LL BE ALONG ANY MINUTE NOW.


CHATTER
HIC
'SS JUS' GIDOUT... AN' TAKE YOR 'IM
PUT
THIS
DOWN
HERE
GRABBA
UMF
BLANKIT
AN' GIO-HIC-UP
AN'
WAIT
FER
SN

AND OF COURSE WE DON'T CALL THEM MANNEQUINS ANY MORE! WE CALL THEM WOMYNNEQUINS
AND THEY LOOK THE WAY REEAL WOMYN DO...
AIN'T THEY FAAABULOUS?
(HIDEOUS.)
THEY'RE VERY DIFFERENT
NOW, IT'S A LITTLE CRAMPED BUT WE FEEL TODAY'S MODERN WOMAN WANTS MORE CHOICE
HOICE IS REAL AT IT'S ALL AS OICE SAYS "M OESN'T IT? CHOI IS FREEDOM TODAY'S MODERN WOMAN
HOUT CHOICES Y'S MODERN WOMA ELS STIFLED, SUPPRESSED NOT FREE!
BRUCE!!!
UH.
KA KLAK
MUST'VE... DOZED OFF
SO HOW'D IT GO?

GRATE!
CERBIGGS ♯HIC♯ APOLOGIZED AN' 'E SEZ 'E SEZ:
"I DON' GIVE ID ANUTHER THOT, OL' SPORT-- IT'Z ALREDDY ♯HIC♯ FERGOTTEN"
AN' THEN WE HADDA FEW ♯HIC♯ SING...
"NEAT"...
JUGGA SHOW THERWUZ NO ♯HIC♯ HARD FEELINGS..
"SING'S?! ♯HIC♯
OH AYE-- AN' CERBIGGS SEZ TO 'IM -- CERBIGGS SEZ "Y'KNOW DOZEN LIGHALLY DRINK ♯HIC♯ GIN...."
"BUDD OUR DAUGHDER ♯HIC♯ SHER DIZ"
- SHICKEN & YOU PIDDENT REALLY...
OH, AYE! AN' THEN 'E SEZ 'E SEZ "WAH! I HAD NO IDEA OL' SPORT!" AN' THEN 'E SEZ ♯HIC♯ "HON OLD IS SHE?"
AN' CERBIGGS SEZ "OHHH! -- FOUR OR FIVE -- CERBIGGS CAN'T REMEMMER EGZACKLY"
AN' 'E GOES
HA HAH HAHH
YOU'RE SO ♯HIC♯ BAD
AN' THEN 'E SEZ -- 'E SEZ "SO... WH-- ♯HIC♯ YOUR ♯HIC♯ DAUGHDER NOW?"
AN' CERBIGGS SEZ "OH SHE'S IN THE STATEROOM"
AN' 'E GOES -- (WELL ♯HIC♯ SUPPOSED) -- 'E GOES: "SHE'S WITH YOU? WHY, I-I THOT I WOULD'VE SEEN 'ER AT ♯HIC♯ SOME POINT..."
AN' CERBIGGS GOES: "OH, WE ♯HIC♯ THREW 'ER IN TH' BOTTOM O' ONE O' THE TRUNKS."
"SO SHE COULD SLEEP OFF 'ER LATEG' 'BENDER'."

OH NO! HA HAHA HAH
AND WHAT DID HE SAYS?
OH, CEREBUS YOU'IN'TWE ?HIC? REAL STORY THEN...
HE THOT ID WUZ PRUDDY ?HIC? FUNNEE
OH, I LOVE YOU...
?
CEREBUS LOVES YOU, ?HIC? TOO
GIVVER CEREBUNNY A GRATE, BIG KISS!
UUG!
NO! YOU SMELL LIKE A DISTILLERY! ?HIC? AND A SMOKE STACK! ?BURP!
C'MON! GIVVER CEREBUNNY A KISS
UUGK!
CEREBUS! ?BURP! NO! NOT UNTIL YOU TAKE A BATH!
NAW! I AIN'T AIN'T GAN
UUG! AND BRUSH YOUR ?HIC? TEETH!
YOU BEDDER GIVE YER CEREBUNNY A KISS OR CEREBUNNY'LL DROOOOL ALL OVER YUH... ♪
OKAY!
OKAY!
OKAY
MMMM
HOW GO AND TAKE A BATH AND ?HIC? BRUSH YOUR TEETH
AN' THEN C'N WE HAVE ?HIC? SEX?!
?GIGGLE?
OH, SURE, HON-- FOR ?HIC? AS LONG AS YOU CAN STAY AWAKE
HOD-DIGGITY! CERBUS'LL BE RIGHT ?HIC? BACK!

GINEVRA

Jay Anthony Diver's almost immediate preoccupation with Ginevra — the Princess of Hearts, as she was popularly known — owed much to his increasing carelessness about himself. He had allowed himself to gravitate to her, desiring to document the desirable and fell, unwittingly, before a personality less vital, less compelling than his own, as he had done with Xena, his wife, some years before. As always he had slid into the matter by misjudging the inevitable outcome to be one possibility amid a vast array of likelihoods. He could say "No!" neither to others nor to himself; the virtuous and the corrupt alike found him tender-hearted and acquiescent. Indeed he seldom allowed of the possibility of negative outcomes until he was ringed 'round by high portentous walls, whereupon he would run to and fro in a panic, crying out that some other had built the walls or that this agency and that had built them — then, he would sit down to weep, confessing piteously that he had built the walls himself. Who can doubt that he was a wicked person. For if he were not wicked, who is — And what is there that we may call evil?

...I see I am starting wrong. Let me begin again.

Ginevra was of an age where all the men she knew were married or unmarriageable. "Men she knew"? — she concealed from herself that all the men she considered friends were vaguely in love with her. It was only those who had resisted professing that they valued her favor above anything in life whom she, in return, had loved.

Inevitably, as the bright moonlight of these men's love had waxed strong, the thin darkness of her own affections had waned. And now — where were they? At least two were dead, the rest scattered from the former T'Capmin Kingdoms to Enothas. She wondered whether any of them thought of her, and how often, and in what respect. Most of them must still picture the little princess or the dancing adolescent siren of...how

many years before, she did not permit herself to recollect.

The girls, too, were gone far afield. She had never been popular with those of her own gender. She had been too beautiful, too insufficiently lazy, too conscious of being a Tavers girl and not a "Future Wife and Mother" in perpetual capital letters. Girls who had surrendered their virtue to prospective husbands hinted darkly to each other — with bitter expressions on their attractive but not particularly wholesome faces—that Ginevra hadn't. Then these girls had gone north or west or east with the men they had reduced to mere husbands, prophesying, if they prophesied about Ginevra, that she would come to a bad end — not wanting to realise that all endings are bad and that their lives, like hers, were inevitably the result and the sum of many incremental destinies.

JOZAN

A "scrolls and key" man (as the young gentlemen of Jay Anthony's generation knew the type), Jozan possessed all the reverent correctnesses of a "good egg," reverent notions of chivalry and implicit nobility — and (though natural and unfortunate) the reverent prejudices and reverent ignorances in lockstep attendance upon them — all those qualities which Ginevra's breeding led her to admire, but which, nevertheless, she rather despised. Unlike the overwhelming preponderance of his type, however, she had found that he was not a bore. He had a peculiar attractiveness, unexpected depths of wit, and with him she owned the certainty of his most apparent trait — call it naiveté, fidelity, romanticism, or some approximation bounded by the three — that he would do anything within his power to please her.

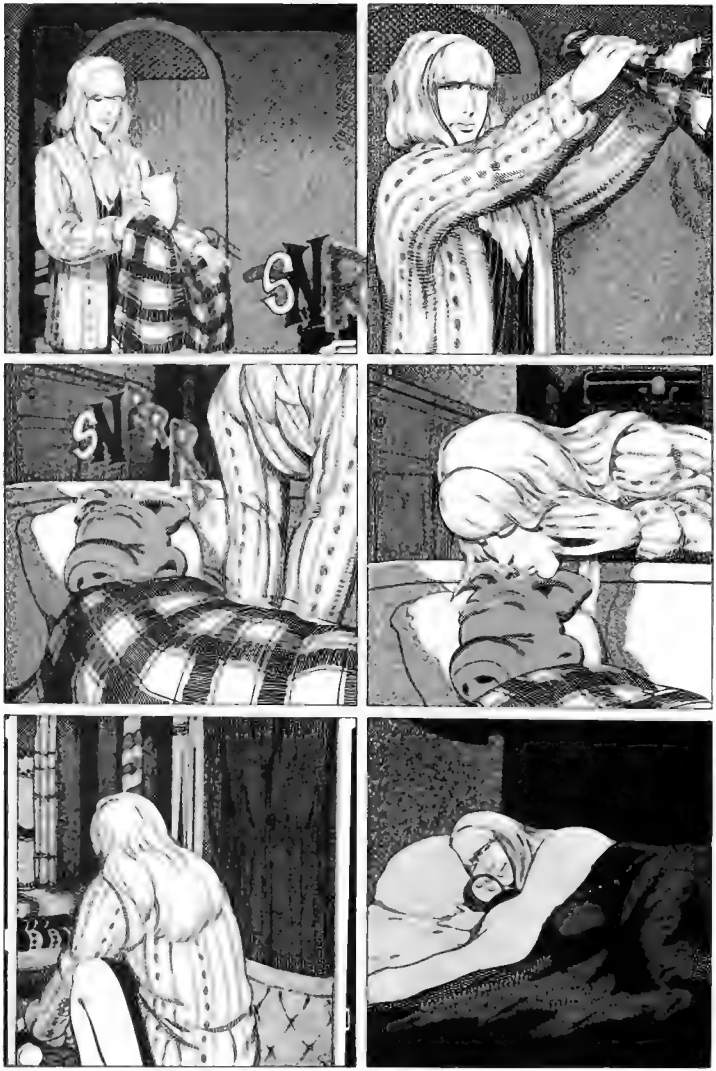
It seemed to Jay Anthony that Jozan had told her this (among other things) quite reverently and with ponderous masculinity, which ill concealed a predisposition to embrace its own suffering. Loving him already, a compassion — which might

yet erode into pity — had moved within her, and she had kissed him one night because his plight was charming, a relic of a vanishing sensibility — stolid yet not wholly ungraceful — already in the process of being displaced by far less noble strains of foolishness.

Upon that first kiss, he surmised their life in tandem tottered in its uncertainty.

They were just at the beginning of the struggle to keep their conversations on the level of discussions. Arguments were corrosive of the gilt veneer of Ginevra's disposition. She had all her life been associated with men who, desiring to possess her intimidating beauty, chose never to contradict her, so that, effectively, she regarded all men as intellectually inferior to herself. Naturally, then, it irritated her that Jozan was emerging from the quiescent state wherein he had previously regarded her pronouncements as definitive and infallible.

Jay Anthony realised, at once, that the friction was the result (partly) of her female nature and (partly) of her beauty, and he included her with the majority of her sex as distinctly and irretrievably limited. It amused him to find that she had no notion of ethics. Her sole intellectual tactic, when a subject did interest her, consisted of battering the opposing view into submission with relentless and tiring non sequiturs. What was chiefly missing from her mind was an awareness of order and consequence, an awareness of life as a mysteriously integrated unity — but he understood that such a quality in her would have been incongruous.



POUND
POUND
POUND
GRR BUG
...JUST...
...WAITS...
TO DIE.
TWITCH
TWITCH
MMM
YOU'VE MENTIONED THAT ALREADY ...
...SEVERAL TIMES
YOU'LL BE ALL RIGHT BY YOURSELF FOR A WHILE WON'T YOU, HON?
I'M DYING FOR SOME FRESH AIR
GRR BUG...
...JUST...
...WAITS...
...TO
KA-KLAK
KA-KLAK

GOOD AFTERNOON
'FRANCIS'
?
ahhh.. Good Afternoon

'PRINCESS'

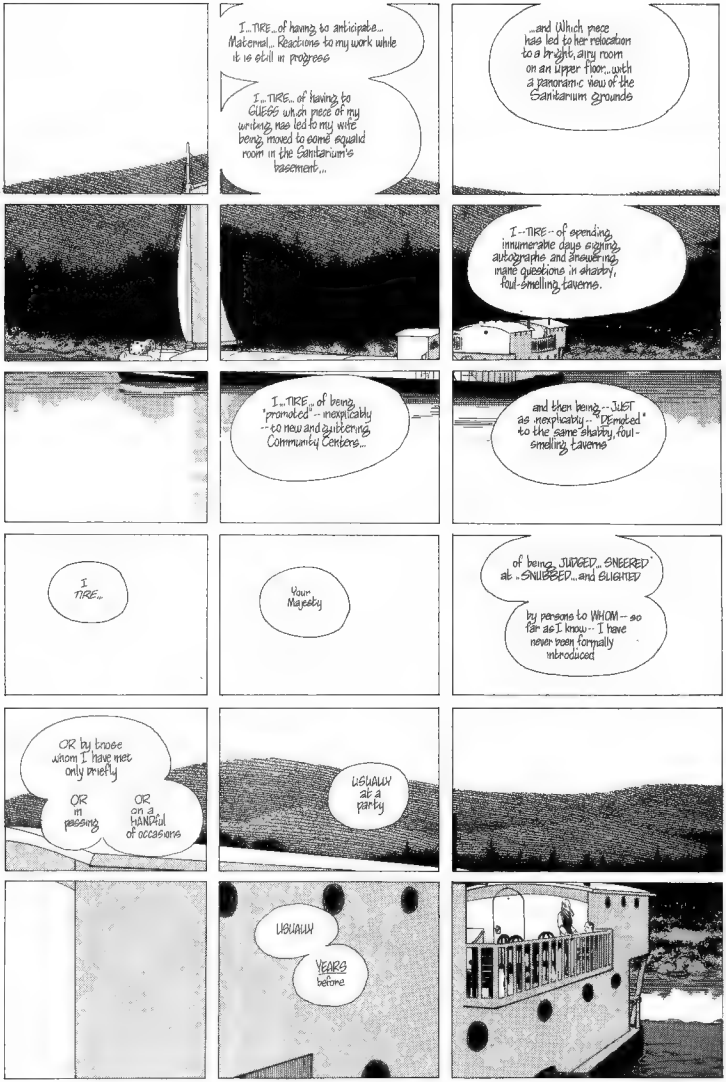
SO.
IS IT A SHORT STORY?
OR A NOVEL

IS. WHAT
A short story.. or a nove..

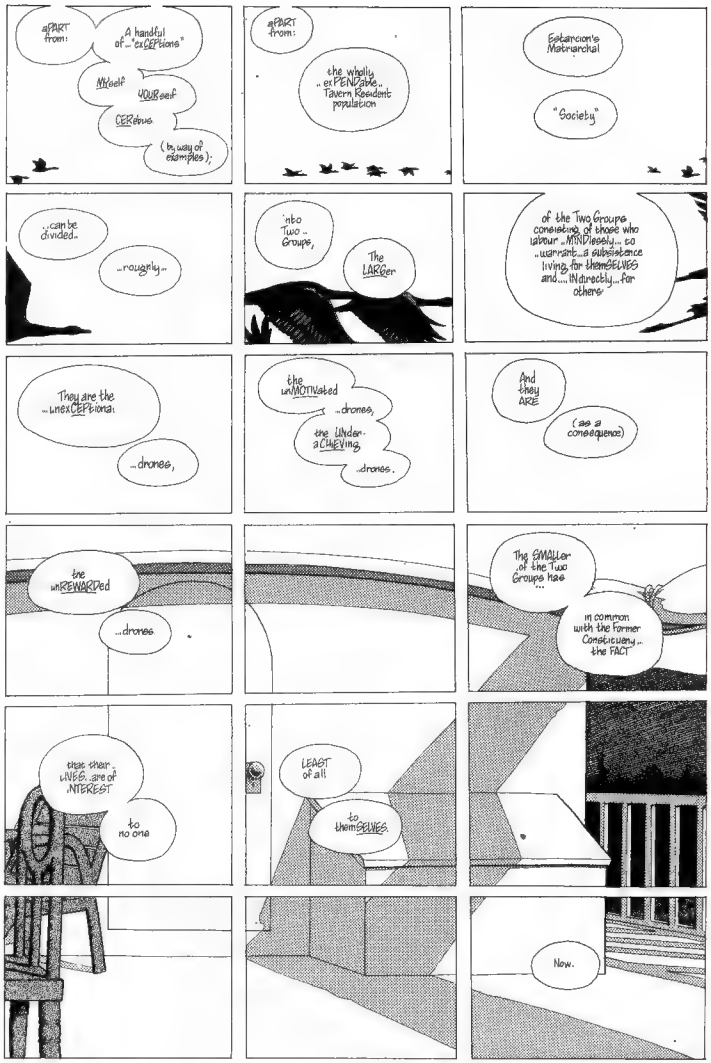
WHATEVER IT IS THAT YOU'RE WRITING ABOUT THIS VOYAGE
ABOUT ME
ABOUT CEREBUS

OH!
it's a novel— or
more precisely
it's PART
of a novel

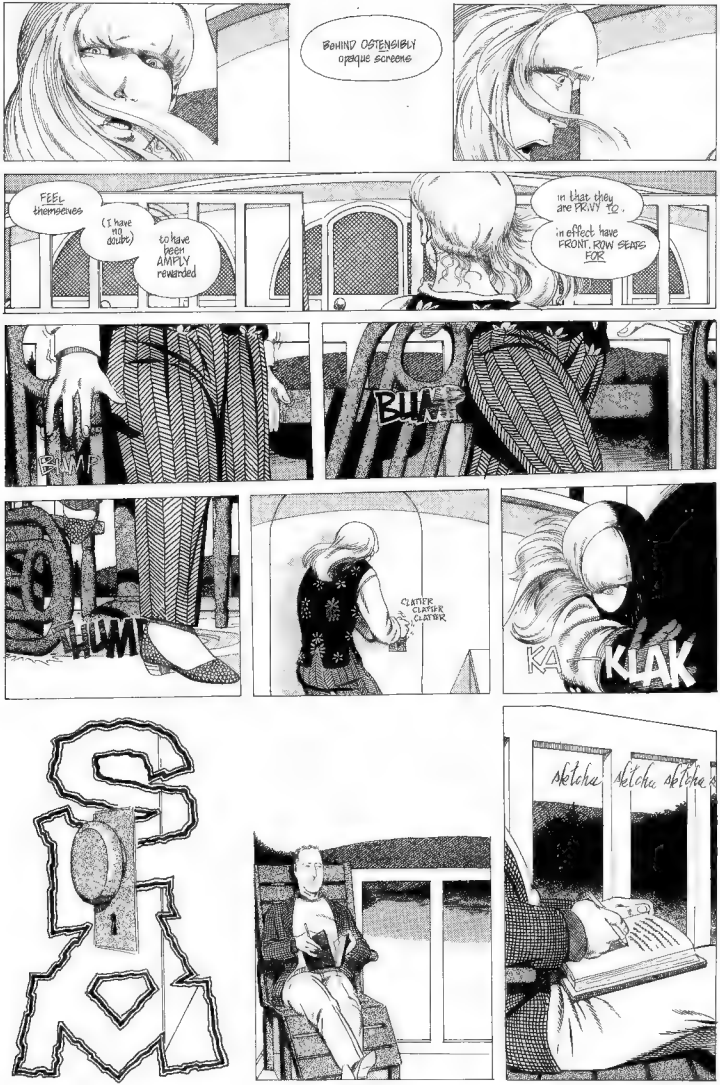
I SHOULD LIKE TO READ WHAT YOU'VE WRITTEN SO FAR
OH!
I'm afRAID that ..that's
QUITE
out of the
PLEASE.
No.
DON'T YOU EVER.
...TIRE...
OF INVADING PEOPLE'S PRIVATE LIVES?..
JUST TO FEED YOUR OWN NOTORIETY?
ALL unnecessary attentions have toxic tendencies.
I...TiRE..of the ...MANY. things.
Your mejeaty.
I...TiRE.. of the widely held misperception that I - SOMEnow-- regard my NOTORIETY (as you call it)
SWOLLEN to MEGaTHERian proportions by the unnecessary attentions I...sustA Ned in my twenties and thirties
as reQuiRing some manner of constant renourishment.


I...TIRE...of having to anticipate... Maternal... Reactions to my work while it is still in progress
I...TIRS...of having to GUESS which piece of my writing, has led to my wife being moved to some squalid room in the Sanitarium's basement...
...and Which piece has led to her relocation to a bright, airy room on an upper floor...with a panoramic view of the Sanitarium Grounds
I--TIRE--of spending innumerable days signing autographs and answering inane questions in shabby, foul-smelling taverns.
I...TIRE... of being, "promoted" -- inexplicably -- to new and glittering Community Centers...
and then being--JUST as inexplicably--"DEmoted" to the same shabby, foul-smelling taverns
I TIRE...
Your Majesty
of being JUDGED...SNEERED at...SNUBBED...and SLIGHTED
by persons to WHOM -- so far as I know -- I have never been formally introduced
OR by those whom I have met only briefly
OR in passing
OR on a HANDful of occasions
USUALLY at a party
USUALLY
YEARS before

I... TIRE... of the "knowing" and "fearless smiles of ignorant and terrified women
I...TIRE...of... Restraining myself from snapping their Self- Delusions like so many dry twigs
Restraining myself in the name of a "Love...in which I no longer believe
FLAP
FLAP
FLAP
FLAP
FLAP
FLAP
FLAP
Flap Flap Flap Flap Flap
You smile.
Your Majesty
"knowingly" and "fearlessly"
DOUBTING that I... POSSESS... the ability to which I refer
HAHAH
WELL, CERTAINLY YOU MAKE IT SEEM AS IF YOU CAN
You wish me to prove it to you
Very Well Then
for Your Majesty's
EDification
One.
tock
twig
tiny.


aPART from:
A handful of... "exCEPtions"
MYself
YOURself
CERebus
(to name but a few examples);
aPART from:
the wholly ..exPENDable.. Tavern Resident population
Estancion's Matriarchal "Society"
..can be divided..
..roughly..
..into Two .. Groups,
The LARGer
of the Two Groups consisting of those who labour ..MINDlessly... so ..warrant... a subsistence living, for themSELVES and.... INdirectly... for others
They are the ...unEXCEPtional
..drones,
the unMOTIvated
..drones,
the Under-aCHIEVing
..drones.
And they ARE
(as a consequence)
the unREWARDed
..drones.
The SMALLer of the Two Groups has ...
in common with the former Constituency... the FACT
that their LIVES...are of INTEREST
to no one
LEAST of all
to themSELVES.
Now.

In the "Rarified" "Upper" Strata of the smaller group
are THOSE who HAVE laboured and who DO labour TIRElessly and efficiently.
As WELL as those WHO... by Happenstance OR by Design
....are perCEIVed by the Matriarchal-Powers-That-Be to have made some
"Lasting" or "Significant" contribution to the plodding "progress" of Matriarchal "Society".
And THEY Your Majesty
Are NOT UNrewarded
Far
FAR from it
In fact, at this very MOMENT THREE such "Worthies"
In three small cabins
CUNNINGly equipped with devices for the amplification of sound


BEHIND OSTENSIBLY opaque screens
FEEL themselves
(I have no doubt)
to have been AMPLY rewarded
in that they are PRIVY TO
in effect have FRONT ROW SEATS FOR
CHAMP
BUMP
THUMP
CLATTER CLATTER CLATTER
KA
KLAK
SPA
sketcha sketcha sketcha

row seats for the...quite possibly...momentous intersection of two lives. Two lives which *are* — unlike their own — of interest to them; two lives which *are* — more significantly and, no doubt, more insidiously — of interest to every woman they know: from their most intimate confidants to their most transitory acquaintances. At the conclusion of our luxurious passage, having discharged their obligatory servitude, they will hasten homeward and hearthward to confidant and acquaintance..."

The Princess reared back as if struck a physical blow, her eyes fixed upon those three implacable, inscrutable screens peering indiscreetly above the apron of the rearmost deck. Jay Anthony's words came to her now as if from some distant and dreadful land.

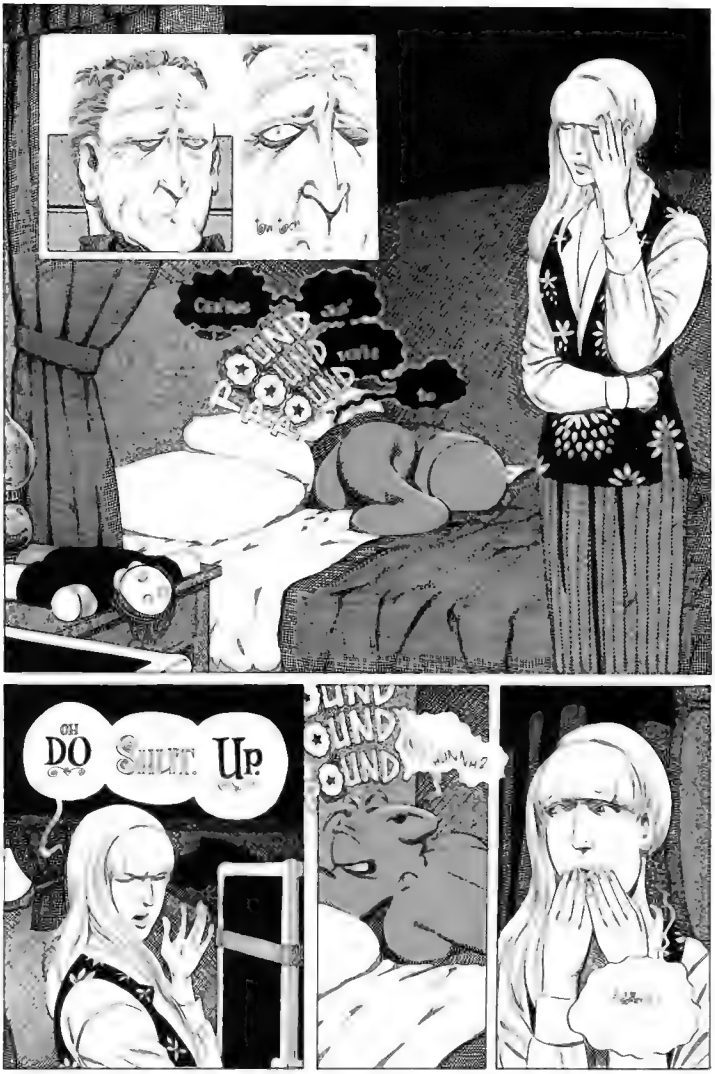
"...there to 'spend,' like drunken sailors, the compensations of their good and faithful service — the only currencies of weight and of substance in our possessionless matriarchal society..."

Ginevra had scuttled back to her stateroom like some ignominious and panic-stricken sand crab, amputating Jay Anthony's concluding remark with a door slam.

"...the private lives of the beautiful..." he murmured to himself, "...and of the damned."

CONSEQUENCE

"His increasing carelessness about himself"? Jay Anthony Diver marvelled at how precipitously that carelessness — through the course of a soliloquy which had lasted mere moments — had eroded into suicidal recklessness. He now possessed, of a certainty, the undivided attentions of those implacable, inscrutable screens. But — even at the greatest elevation of his inward vanity — he could in no wise delude himself that, in the hearts and minds of his largely illiterate auditors, he was judged a fitting substitute for the beloved "Princess of the People." What if Ginevra elected to remain with Jozan in her stateroom for the balance of the voyage? What if Jay Anthony Diver was to be left alone in his captured spotlight, having chased *la prima donna di tutti prima donnas* from the barge's "stage"?


POUND
POUND
POUND
OH
DO
SHUT
UP

I'M SORRY MOM I'
REALLY HATE TO BARGE IN WITH MY PROBS NOW
WHO?
OH MOM AIN'T
OUF!
Flop
OH NO!
WHAT?
POUND
POUND
KAY (sniff)
?
POUND
POUND
PLEEASE SAY "NO"
EVERYTHING'S FINE. I'M
I'M JUST GETTING MY PERIOD
SWELL.

CHASING SCOTT

Page 210 — Fans of *The Great Gatsby* will recognize Jay Gatsby's trademark salutation, "Old Sport," in the conversation Cerebus is relating here. I suspect that such salutations as "Old Sport," "Old Man," et al. had already eroded into "Pal" and "Buddy" by Fitzgerald's time — well on their way to "Man" and "Dude" in our current misapprehension of an age.

ORIGINS

It is received wisdom in most literary circles that *The Great Gatsby* is F. Scott Fitzgerald's only "great" novel. I vehemently disagree. Personally, I place *The Great Gatsby* a very, very distant third behind *The Beautiful and Damned* and *Tender is the Night* in Fitzgerald's oeuvre. Apart from my own pet theory that *The Great Gatsby* represents Scott Fitzgerald's partial acquiescence to what I see as Hemingway's corruption/"innovation" (if novels are going to compete with movies, we have to write 'em short enough so a literate person can read 'em in the same length of time it takes to watch a movie, and we have to write 'em stupid enough so even morons can understand 'em), I believe *Gatsby* is more highly regarded in literary environs for reasons of gender politics; Gatsby pines away for Daisy and then dies — and that suits the tactical agenda of the unfairer sex as the "last word" on the Fitzgeralds: Scott pining away for Zelda and then dying.

I believe that *Tender is the Night* gets dismissed in these same circles because it is more factual than *Gatsby* and that the *way* it is more factual than *Gatsby* is very much at *variance* with the tactical agenda of the unfairer sex: that is to say, Zelda was insane and what was Scott to do about it? This, it seems to me, is a far more factual "last word" on the Fitzgeralds than "Scott pining away for Zelda and then dying."

I believe *The Beautiful and Damned* is not only dismissed but *eradicated* in these same literary circles (when was the last time you saw the novel mentioned?) because it represents the clearest documentation of the origins of the factual "last word" on the Fitzgeralds. Here is Zelda's insanity at the beginning of their relationship. Here is Zelda's insanity during their courtship. Here is Zelda's insanity on their honeymoon. Here is Zelda's insanity during...well, you get the idea.

The Beautiful and Damned, to me, represents most of the points of origin of the full flowering of female insanity in this century and how female insanity ensnares, corrupts, and (if allowed to do so) ultimately destroys masculine sanity

Mind you, it's very, very funny.

For 1922, particularly, it is a very keenly observed, very sophisticated blending of autobiography, the best of Victorian drawing-room comedy (its most immediate antecedent), and the domestic "screwball" comedy (its most immediate successor) which would dominate Hollywood for several decades from Powell and Loy in the *Thin Man* movies to Tracy and Hepburn in *Adam's Rib*. Even leaving aside what I see as the book's considerable literary merits, it seems suspicious that its influence on popular culture would be so consistently overlooked by those who see popular culture as having signpost significance. The only way I can account for it is the potential harm it represents for the unfairer sex's tactical agenda.

Scott Fitzgerald, very late in his short life, in correspondence with his daughter, Scotty, assured the young college student (who, I surmise, had just read *The Beautiful and Damned*) that Zelda had not been at all like Gloria Patch except in a few surface details. Well, this is nonsense. There is far too much evidence and too many eyewitness accounts to the contrary. Fitzgerald was just (needlessly, in my view) playing the gentleman. It was silly to try to protect his daughter from the fact that her mother was insane. Far better if he had just said, "Your mother was insane and — if you aren't already — soon you will be, too." But, no, the central recurrent lie in the father/daughter relationship so cherished by fathers and daughters everywhere has to assert itself: "Don't tell Daddy about any of the insane things I do/think/say. It's important that I can continue to delude him into thinking that I'm sane. I mean, *I* know I'm insane, but it's so nice to have someone in my life I can fool. I sure can't fool *mud*ther."

(This is all rather long-winded and I apologize for that. However, the text pieces in this section of "Fall and the River" represent the foundation on which the story line was built—and it requires more than a few words to explain my motivations and sequence of decisions which led to "Fall and the River" having the content and structure that it does. Consider most of this section as a terribly windy exposition in answer to the question — and aren't you sorry you asked? — "Why *The Beautiful and Damned*?")

It is particularly fascinating to me — even while I am laughing out loud at Anthony and Gloria getting their new car, Anthony and Gloria arguing about the laundry, Anthony and Gloria discussing their baby-to-be — that Gloria, step by intuitive step, ensnares, corrupts, and devours what few vestiges of masculinity Anthony possesses and that Scott Fitzgerald *documents* the whole monstrous business with great wit and flair and eloquence without *once* evincing the *least* concern with the process — even as the same hideous process was taking place in his own life at the same time. I mean, not a word apart from a kind of amiable, glib, shoulder-shrugging, "Heh-heh. *Wives*, eh? What's a fellow to do?"

DO!?! GET *OUT*!!!! RUN FOR YOUR LIFE!! THROW MONEY AT THE BITCH UNTIL SHE GOES AWAY!!! WHATEVER IT COSTS, IT WILL BE CHEAP AT TWICE, THREE TIMES THE PRICE!! SCOTT!! SCOTT!! LISTEN TO ME—THINK OF YOUR *TALENT, YOUR CREATIVITY, YOUR*

CONTRIBUTION TO WESTERN LITERATURE!!!!! SCOOOTTTTTTTT!!!!!!

You know, I just had the same experience with Leo Tolstoy when I read *War and Peace*. I'd be reading these really amazing insights into the female gender, and I'd have to keep flipping back to the introduction. "Hang on. He *knows* all this and he got *married*? And had *thirteen children*? What sort of an *idiot was* this genius?" Then I remembered having heard something about him dying in a train station, trying to get away from the loony bitch, so I tracked down one of the multitude of Tolstoy biographies available at the library. And, well…

What an *idiot* that genius was!

I mean, apart from trying to run away on the train, which — when you know you're dying — strikes me as a little late in the day for a genius to try to stop being an idiot.

I digress.

Anyway.

From my initial series of "concept notes" as I approached "Fall and the River":

The problem posed by F. Scott Fitzgerald, to me, is that he chose — partly as a consequence of the time in which he lived and worked (which constitutes more of an excuse than a reason) — to limit his horizons to "love" and "gods," rather than God and the love of God. My goal, with Pleasure's Simple Life, *F. Stop Kennedy's book on his autumn barge ride with Jaka and Cerebus, is to attempt to redress what I see as the grievous imbalance posed by Fitzgerald's choice of low horizons; to raise those horizons inasmuch as it is possible to do so by rewriting Fitzgerald, even as Fitzgerald himself "rewrote" much of Fitzgerald in his lifetime. It is a delicate balancing act which will be assisted, I think, through the Cirinist elimination of currency. Without base materialism, Fitzgerald, it seems to me, has to become a better Fitzgerald. Instead of merely staying ahead of the problem of living beyond one's means by devoting a disproportionate amount of time and energy to lesser but more lucrative work (the* Saturday Evening Post *stories), one would be forced to anticipate the ethical and moral implications posed by the Cirinist revolution. "Zelda" is being cared for, and her material comfort level varies in direct proportion to F. Stop's moral and ethical usefulness, as perceived by the Cirinists — the* perceived *usefulness of his literary insights in assisting the Cirinists to plot the "trajectory" of their ongoing revolution. Without the mundane to occupy his attentions and with genuine concern for "Zelda" as his motivation — and with his bitterness restricted to his natural rebellion against the status quo (his inherent writerly rebellion) — he becomes disengaged from Fitzgerald's Oscar Wildean urge to turn everything upside down and grab a disproportionate number of societal "goodies" for himself ("A Diamond as Big as the Ritz," indeed) and instead is forced to play cat-and-mouse with his Cirinist captors. Occasionally F. Stop is the cat — when his writing introduces some hitherto unconsidered nuance of great creative and/or destructive power into the society-wide telepathic debate—but, more often, the mouse, as he is either misunderstood, understood too quickly, or is arbitrarily oversimplified in Cirinist telepathic "translation."*

So, that is what I attempted to do: by taking extracts of varying length from *The Beautiful and Damned*, I endeavoured to rewrite them as I thought they would be written by a more ethical F. Scott Fitzgerald. Not "as they would be written by a more ethical *writer*" or "as *I* would write them on the basis of my *own* ethics," but as I thought they would be written by the specific character I was attempting to create.

By way of example:

Page 212 — The first half of the first paragraph is from page 325 of *The Beautiful and Damned*, the "A Matter of Civilization" chapter. Approximately twelve lines concerning Anthony's affair with Dorothy Raycroft. I photocopied the twelve lines onto an 11" x 17" sheet of paper (the lower right corner) and wrote "F. Stop on his feelings for Jaka" at the top.*

* I intentionally allotted myself *only* the space that was left over on the 11" x 17" sheet for constructing , by hand, each piece in question. I realize that, in this computer-addicted age, this seems a very strange way to go about the task of writing — that is, by actually *writing* — but I do want to express my advocacy of *actually writing* when one wants to *write* It seems to me that the problem with trying to "write" on a computer is that you are always looking at an ostensibly finished-looking piece. On a computer you can take things out, move them around, insert additional material, all without affecting the aesthetic appearance of a finished-looking block of text, and this strikes me as a really undisciplined way to go about things. By actually *writing* the material out *by hand* and having to cross out unsuitable phrasing and composition, I find I have a much clearer idea of my own level of attention and discipline (and lack of same) which I am bringing to bear on the piece of writing in question. As an example: if I cross out the same sentence three times, I know that I am being inattentive, lazy, and undisciplined. At that point, I put my pen down, sit back, and *work* at improving my level of attention and discipline *mentally* before I pick up my pen again. On a computer, all corrections disappear into the void, leaving no evidence of their former existence and no evidence of attention and discipline. For less important writing — like these notes — I can work on a typewriter (as I am doing now). The required level of attention and discipline seems to result from my unwillingness to use the white correction ribbon for anything more than two or three characters and my disinterest in making any substantial changes once Carol has "input" the material. I type in bursts of eight or nine words, and then I stop and *mentally solidify* the structure and phrasing of the *next* eight or nine words before I even *consider* typing them out. I say this in the interest of perhaps helping some future writer who might be reading this: just because everyone you know is addicted to using a computer does not mean that it is the best tool for writing. In my opinion exactly the opposite is true. Computers, by their very nature, are lazy instruments which encourage inattentiveness and a lack of discipline, and are, consequently, destructive of whatever natural writing ability you might possess. This is particularly true for F. Scott Fitzgerald's brand of writing, with its extensive rewriting and polishing of every phrase. If Scott had had a computer and lived to be ninety, I can practically guarantee that all we would have of his would be the first ten pages of *This Side of Paradise*.

This is what I was referring to earlier when I said that I intended to push the envelope of what constitutes plagiarism, parody, satire, etc. Essentially, I reworked each phrase, each sentence, and occasionally each word until it was consistent with my mental picture of F. Stop Kennedy, character and author.

In Fitzgerald's original: "Anthony's affair with Dorothy Raycroft was an inevitable result of his increasing carelessness about himself."

Hung over on Saturday morning in my brand-spanking-new library/den in the spare bedroom of my apartment, I would reread each sentence any number of times to see if anything jumped out at me.

Ah!

"…*an* inevitable result."

Then I would sit back and mull it over. It should be "*the*," shouldn't it? "[A]n" would imply that there can be more than one "inevitable" result. If there's more than one possible result, ipso facto, it isn't inevitable, right?

After fifteen or twenty minutes of interior debate, I wrote down: "Jay Anthony Diver's preoccupation with Ginevra, the Princess of Hearts as she was popularly known, *owed much* to his increasing carelessness about himself." "Owed much" seemed at least incrementally more ethical, more truthfully self-aware than "an inevitable result of…" F. Scott Fitzgerald can describe an affair as being "an inevitable result," since Scott, by his own admission, never thought (when he was finally forced to try it, he described thinking as "the moving about of great secret trunks"). Such a thing is impossible for F. Stop Kennedy. His "preoccupation" with a woman not his wife can "owe much to his increasing carelessness about himself," but, much or little, the ethical decision is his to make or not make. Following the same sort of process, I added "immediate" to "preoccupation" and — after mulling it over a while — added "almost" to "immediate." To F. Stop, ethics and truthfulness hang on just such sharp and fine distinctions. A husband having a "preoccupation" with a woman who is not his wife is an ethical transgression, but it is not as great a transgression as an "affair," nor is it "inevitable" in any way. The fact that it is "almost immediate" constitutes F. Stop's indictment of himself, the "almost" representing both a qualification that a choice was involved and that an ethical boundary has been crossed.

Does anyone else *care* about any of this? Probably not. "Love at first sight" and all that rubbish. Ah, well. *My* story. *My* notes. Suffer, dear reader, suffer…

The balance of the first paragraph is freely adapted from a rejected passage from an earlier draught of *The Beautiful and Damned* — rejected because Zelda found it "too moralistic" and Max Perkins agreed with her (if I recall correctly). No big surprise that I found it to be *in*sufficiently moralistic — or, rather, ethical — in that it was all plural, referring to Anthony *and* Gloria: "*they* were ringed 'round by high portentous walls whereupon *they* would run to and fro in a panic…" etc. It seems to me that all ethics are singular, all sound ethical choices are individual. It's the reason that I find marriage ethically perverse. Decision-making in the context of marriage isn't made on the basis of distinctions between right and wrong but rather on a series of trade-offs — doing something that one thinks is wrong in exchange for the "partner" doing something one thinks is right, or the "partners" jointly concluding that something that is widely perceived to be wrong is in fact right, or (conversely) that something that is widely perceived to be right is in fact wrong, etc. In my own view, if such a societal sickness is left untreated, inside of a few decades it leads to Yoko Ono.

"I see I am starting wrong. Let me begin again."

This transition—which I find absolutely brilliant — I stole, word for word, from one of Fitzgerald's short stories. I'm going to be just "sloppy and unprofessional" enough to not go and look it up. I'm sort of making fun of my own obsession with ethics here. F. Stop starts writing about being attracted to Jaka and then immediately swerves into an internal debate about ethics. In my view, he isn't starting wrong at all, but he does recognize that he is losing his audience by swerving from attraction into ethics. In order to retain the attention of the Cirinists and (ultimately) his readers, F. Stop — like all narrative creators (another pet theory of mine) — has to refrain from any consideration of ethics and conform to the universal and amoral romantic construct: greater attraction follows attraction, just as still greater attraction follows greater attraction (and ethics be damned).

Page 213 — F. Stop Kennedy chooses to walk a tightrope here by moving obliquely from his own attraction to "Ginevra" to the legions of those who have been attracted to "Ginevra" in the past — thus fulfilling the mandatory progression from attraction to greater attraction (substituting the quantitative for the qualitative) while removing himself and his ethics from the equation (temporarily). The last paragraph of the "Ginevra" section is a parody of a fragment from the "A Matter of Aesthetics" chapter (*The Beautiful and Damned*, page 363), which concerns Gloria's isolation and self-examination in the immediate aftermath of Anthony going off to war (like Fitzgerald, he never actually gets there). F. Stop has rather artfully (I must say) manipulated the "rules" of romantic narrative. Having started with his own attraction to Ginevra and achieved the required amoral progression by alluding to her previous legions of suitors, he moves to the next level of still greater attraction — "Ginevra's" profound attraction to herself and her own "story." Since all women have a greater attraction to themselves and their stories than they have to any mate, any potential suitor, or their previous suitors, the Cirinists and F. Stop's readers see nothing amiss in the "progression," and their attention is maintained.

Back at *The Beautiful and Damned*, Gloria, bored with self-examination (and it never takes long, does it?), finds herself out on the town (pages 368-69) with another woman (whose husband has also gone off to war) and a

couple of military types on leave. Gloria, of course, is completely innocent in her intentions and horrified to find out that a certain amount of hanky-panky is expected from her. I photocopied Fitzgerald's description of Gloria's "date" and wrote at the top: "F. Stop on Cerebus: very early on." Fitzgerald's original character was a member of the famous "Scroll and Keys" club at Yale. Very much at a loss as to what to do with this, I changed it to "scrolls and key," and I leave it entirely up to the reader to decide what the young men of F. Stop Kennedy's generation mean by that appellation. I haven't the faintest idea, but it doesn't sound good, does it?

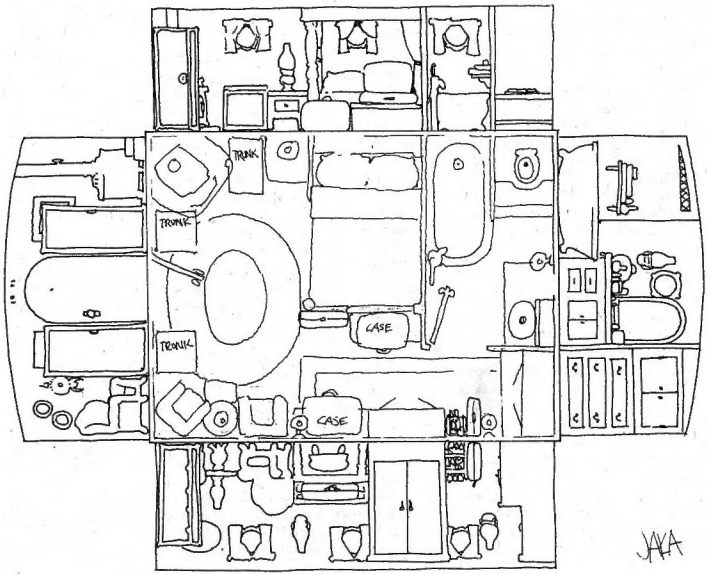
Page 214 — The progression is complete: attraction (F. Stop's for "Ginevra") to greater attraction (all of her previous suitors) to still greater attraction (Ginevra for herself) to the greatest possible attraction (her current and most devoted "beau," "Jozan"). F. Stop then finishes off the section with a one-sentence paragraph foreshadowing what he *hopes* is the imminent erosion of the "Jozan and Ginevra" relationship (a definite ethical transgression on his part), fulfilling the ultimate cliché of the romantic narrative: attraction, greater attraction, still greater attraction, greatest attraction, destruction — unless you go in for that "happily ever after" stuff.

The last paragraph is a parody of an earlier section of *The Beautiful and Damned*, wherein Anthony takes his first good hard look at Gloria (I didn't keep the page number when I photocopied it, so no page number, scholar squirrels. Sorry). This is where the story gets really dangerous, since F. Stop is a lot more sophisticated than Cerebus and Jaka put together. Jaka has no idea this is true, and that puts her at quite a disadvantage.

It came as quite a surprise to me (I must admit) when five of *The Beautiful and Damned* pieces I had reworked and *intended* to scatter through "Fall and the River" — Johnny Appleseed fashion — coalesced into one thumping great three-page chunk.

Page 218 — Doing all of the parody text pieces first and developing the comic-book narrative around them presented interesting opportunities. One of the things I wanted to clarify was — just as F. Stop Kennedy is not a thinly veiled Dave Sim (apart from surface similarities, such as both of us writing while shaving) — so too is Jay Anthony Diver not a thinly veiled F. Stop Kennedy. "He could say 'No!' neither to others nor to himself; the virtuous and the corrupt alike found him tender-hearted and acquiescent." A handful of pages later, Jaka wants to read what he has written so far and he, quite flatly, tells her "No."

That's telling her, Francis, old man.



Ginevra

preoccupation pink
Jay Anthony Diver's ~~obsession for~~ Ginevra, the Princess of Hearts as she was popularly known, owed much to his increasing carelessness about himself.

Ginevra

Jay Anthony Diver's almost immediate preoccupation with Ginevra, the Princess of Hearts as was popularly known, owed much to his increasing carelessness about himself. He went to her desiring to possess the desirable and ~~dell~~ unwittingly fell before a personality less vital, less compelling than his own, as he had done with Gloria — his wife — some years before. As always he slid into the matter through misjudging the inevitable as merely one possibility in a vast array of likelihoods.

Ginevra

Jay Anthony Diver's almost immediate preoccupation with Ginevra — the Princess of Hearts as she was popularly known — owed much to his increasing carelessness about himself. He went to her desiring to possess the desirable and fell, unwittingly, before a personality less vital, less compelling than his own, as he had done with Gloria, his wife, some years before. As always he slid into the matter by misjudging the inevitable outcome to be one possibility and a vast array of likelihoods. He could say "No!" neither to others nor to himself; the virtuous and the corrupt alike found him tender-hearted and acquiescent. Indeed he seldom ~~perceived~~ the possibility of negative outcomes until he was ringed round by ~~his~~ high portentous walls ~~of~~ ~~his~~ ~~own~~ building, crying out that some other had built them, ~~and~~ ~~that~~ ~~he~~ ~~was~~ ~~not~~ responsible for them, ~~and~~ ~~that~~ ~~he~~ ~~was~~ ~~not~~ sitting down to weep, ~~that~~ ~~he~~ ~~was~~ ~~not~~ to blame, that this agency and that had built them — then, ~~sitting~~ down to weep, ~~and~~ confessedly piteously that he had built the walls himself. Who can doubt ~~that~~ if he were a wicked person. For if he were not wicked, who ~~can~~ is — And what ~~have~~ that we may call evil?

.. I see I am starting wrong. Let me begin again.

As always he slid into the matter through misperceiving, inevitably as a ~~short~~ of likelihood to be a merely possible likelihood, one of a panoply of likelihoods

As always he slid into the matter through ~~disregarding~~ regarding the inevitable as merely one, in a vast array of likelihoods.

As always he slid into the matter through misjudging the inevitable as merely one possibility in a vast array of likelihoods

viewing

F. Stop on his feelings for Jake

degrees of

his unwillingness to calculate likelihood, to weigh the probability of negative outcomes, and to foresee the detrimental or long-term repercussions.

He could say "No!" neither to herself nor to others; and so engineered time after time, the small self-destructions

with as result that

He could say "No!" neither to others nor to himself; repercussion and consequence

He ~~unwittingly~~ said "No!" neither to others nor to himself; the beautiful and the damned alike found him

; the virtuous and the corrupt alike found him tender-hearted and acquiescent

Dor

Anthony's affair with Dorothy Raycroft was an inevitable result of his increasing carelessness about himself. He did not go to her desiring to possess the desirable, nor did he fall before a personality more vital, more compelling than his own, as he had done with Gloria four years before. He merely slid into the matter

A MATTER OF CIVILIZATION 325

through his inability to make definite judgments. He could say "No!" neither to man nor woman; borrower and temptress alike found him tender-minded and pliable. Indeed he seldom made decisions at all, and when he did they were but half-hysterical resolves formed in the panic of some aghast and irreparable awakening.